Annual Dinner '12

Canadian Tamil Congress
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Congrès Tamoul Canadien
"Voice of Tamil Canadians"


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Annual Dinner '12

Grand Baccus Banquet & Conference Centre

Saturday, January 21, 2012 5:00 p.m.

Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Congrès Tamoul Canadien

"The Voice of Tamil Canadian"

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Canadian National Anthem

O Canada!
Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.

With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!

From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.

God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee

தமிழ்த் தாய் வாழ்த்து

வாழ்க நிரந்தரம் வாழ்க தமிழ்மொழி
வாழிய வாழியவே
வான மளந்தனைத்தும் அளந்திடும்
வண் மொழி வாழியவே
ஏழ் கடல் வைப்பினுந் தன் மணம் வீசி
இசை கொண்டு வாழியவே
எங்கள் தமிழ் மொழி எங்கள் தமிழ் மொழி
என்றென்றும் வாழியவே
சூழ்கலி நீங்கத் தமிழ் மொழி ஓங்கத்
துலங்குக வையகமே
தொல்லை வினைதரு தொல்லை யகன்று
சுடர்க தமிழ் நாடே
வாழ்க தமிழ் மொழி வாழ்க தமிழ் மொழி
வாழ்க தமிழ் மொழியே
வானம் அறிந்தனைத்தும் அறிந்து
வளர் மொழி வாழியவே

Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Congrès Tamoul Canadien
"Voice of Tamil Canadians"

Mission and Objectives

The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) is a non-profit organization which serves as the voice of Tamil Canadians. Headquartered in Toronto, the CTC has 11 chapters across the country and an elected board of directors. The non-partisan organization works as the community's spokesperson on the municipal, provincial, federal and international levels. Its chapters can be found in Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax, London, Edmonton, Vancouver, Waterloo, Winnipeg, Windsor and Regina.

- Uphold Canadian values of human rights, multiculturalism, religious and cultural diversity, gender equality, pluralism and volunteerism
- Promote the participation of Tamil Canadians in activities of local, regional, provincial and national importance
- Work with various levels of governments in Canada to highlight and resolve issues impacting Tamil Canadians
- Cooperate with Canadian and international organizations in alleviating the suffering of Tamils and provide humanitarian assistance to Tamils worldwide
- Champion for equality, equality rights and equal opportunity for all diverse groups, in particular gender equality, by working towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and intolerance
- Recognize and support the social, cultural and political aspirations of the Tamils in Tamil Eelam and worldwide. Advance the research, study and usage of the Tamil language and culture
- Develop and enhance working relationships with other cultural groups in Canada

Mission et Objectifs

Le congrès Tamoul canadien (CTC), est un organisme à but non lucratif qui représente la voix des Tamouls canadiens. Le siège social étant à Toronto, le CTC possède 11 chapitres dans l'ensemble du pays ainsi qu'un conseil administratif élu. L'organisme agit comme un porte- parole non-partisan de la communauté au niveau municipal, provincial, fédéral et international. Ces chapitres sont situés à Ottawa, Montréal, Halifax, Londres, Edmonton, Vancouver, Waterloo, Winnipeg, Guelph et Régina.

- Confirmez les valeurs canadiennes des droits de l'homme, multiculturalisme, diversité religieuse et culturelle, égalité entre les sexes, pluralisme et volontarisme
- Favorisez la participation des canadiens tamoul dans les activités d'importance locale, régionale, provinciale et nationale. Travaillez avec de divers niveaux des gouvernements au Canada pour accentuer et résoudre des problèmes effectuant les canadiens tamoul
- Coopérez avec des organismes canadiens et internationaux à alléger la douleur et fournissez l'assistance humanitaire aux tamoul dans le monde entier
- Champion pour l'égalité, les droits d'égalité et l'égalité des chances pour tous les groupes divers, en particulier égalité entre les sexes, en travaillant vers l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination et d'intolérance
- Identifiez et soutenez les aspirations sociales, culturelles et politiques des Tamoul sur île du Tamoul Eelam et dans le monde entier
- Avancez la recherche, l'étude et l'utilisation de la langue et de la culture tamoul
- Développez et augmentez les relations de travail avec d'autres groupes ethnoculturels au Canada

Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
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"Voice of Tamil Canadians"

நோக்கம் மற்றும் குறிக்கோள்கள்

கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை ஒரு இலாப நோக்கமற்ற, கனடியத் தமிழரின் குரலாய் விளங்கும் அமைப்பாகும். ரொறன்ரோவிலே தலைமைப் பணிமனையைக் கொண்ட பேரவை நாடு முழுவதும் 11 கிளைகளோடு ஒரு தேசிய அமைப்பாக விளங்குவதோடு உறுப்பினரால் தெரிவு செய்யப்பட்ட இயக்குனர் சபையையும் கொண்டதாகும்.

பக்கச் சார்பற்றுச் செயற்படும் கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை கனடியக் குமுகச் செயற்பாடுகளில் தமிழர்களின் பங்கேற்றலை ஊக்குவித்தல், தமிழர்களின் முக்கிய பிரச்சினைகளை முதன்மைப்படுத்துதல் மற்றும் கனடிய விழுமியங்களைப் பேணுவதுடன் வேற்றின குமுகங்களும் அரசாங்கங்களும் ஏனைய அமைப்புக்களும் தமிழர்களின் குமுக, கலாச்சார மற்றும் அரசியல் பிரச்சினைகளைப் பேசச்செய்தல் போன்றவற்றை முக்கிய நோக்கமாகக் கொண்டதாகும். பேரவையின் குறிக்கோள்கள் சில கீழ்வருமாறு:

- உள்ளூர், கோட்டம், மாநிலம், நாட்டு முதன்மை வாய்ந்த செயற்பாடுகளில் கனடாத் தமிழரது பங்கேற்றலை ஊக்குவித்தல்
- கனடாத் தமிழர் தொடர்பான சிக்கல்களை முன்னிலைப்படுத்தித் தீர்வு காண்பதற்குப் பல்வேறு மட்டக் கனடா அரசுகளோடு இணைந்து செயற்படல்
- தாயகத்திலும், உலகெங்கும் வாழும் தமிழரது குமுக, பண்பாட்டு, அரசியல் வேட்கைகளை ஏற்றுப் போற்றுதல்
- மனித உரிமை, பல்பண்பாடு, சமய-பண்பாட்டுப் பல்வண்மை, பால் ஒப்புமை, பன்மைநெறி, தொண்டுநெறி ஆகிய கனடாவின் விழுமியங்களை மேம்படுத்தல்
- தமிழ் மொழி மற்றும் பண்பாடு பற்றிய ஆய்வு, கல்வி, பயன்பாடு என்பவற்றை மேம்படுத்தல்
- கனடாவின் பிற இனப்பண்பாட்டுக் குழுமங்களோடு உறவு பூணுதலும் வளர்த்தலும்
- கனடா மற்றும் பன்னாட்டு அமைப்புகளோடு இணைந்து, உலகளாவிய தமிழ் மக்களின் இன்னல் போக்கலும் மாந்த நேய உதவி வழங்கலும்
- அனைத்து வேறுபாடுகளையும், பொறுதியின்மையையும் ஒழிப்பதற்குப் பாடுபடுதல். அனைத்துக் குழுமங்களுக்கும் ஒப்பான உரிமை மற்றும் வாய்ப்பு நாடிப் பாடுபடல். சிறப்பாக பால் ஒப்புமை நாடிப் போராடல்.

Message from the President



On behalf of the Canadian Tamil Congress, I welcome you to our 5th Annual Thai Pongal Dinner. Thai Pongal signifies the beginning of the Tamil New Year and is observed by over 80 million Tamils around the world.

Thai Pongal is a season of gratitude. We thank nature – the rain, sun and soil for a bountiful harvest and the farmstead livestock that help create material abundance. Thai Pongal is a time of thanksgiving. Tamil Canadians, from coast to coast, irrespective of their faith, celebrate Thai Pongal with great enthusiasm.

This year, all of us at the Canadian Tamil Congress, would like to thank you for your generous support. Your contributions of time, energy and financial resources have strengthened the voice of Tamil Canadians both at the national and international levels.

As I look back on 2011, I see a year of numerous achievements, learning experiences and a foundation for success on which we can continue to build upon. As part of our commitment to creating a legacy of volunteerism and philanthropy in our community, CTC organized a successful walk-a-thon campaign in support of Amnesty International. Together, we raised $50,000.00! CTC also commemorated the 25th anniversary of the arrival of 156 migrants off the shores of Newfoundland by honouring Captain Gus Dalton and his crew for their rescue efforts. CTC was instrumental in organizing a press conference in the Canadian Parliament to bring attention to the Channel 4 documentary entitled 'Sri Lanka's Killings Fields' and the UN Expert Panel's report on accountability. CTC also partnered with Canadian Blood Services and we have been actively seeking blood donors through our 4th Annual Blood Drive.

In 2012, we will continue to facilitate the integration of Tamil Canadians into the wider community by promoting active participation in civic engagement and partnering with other organizations. We are also excited about launching new programs this year and updating our strategic plan for the next five years. CTC will continue its advocacy campaigns at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. We will continue to engage politicians about local issues affecting all Canadians and addressing accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. CTC also looks forward to taking its advocacy efforts to the international level this year at the United Nations.

As CTC embarks upon a new year, with new beginnings, opportunities and challenges ahead of us, we will take a confident step forward knowing that we can count on YOUR support to help us move forward. We will at all times, continue in our efforts to give back to this country that we have come to call home.
On behalf of everyone at the Canadian Tamil Congress, I would like to wish you and your family a very happy Thai Pongal and a 2012 filled with joy, good health and prosperity.

Best wishes,

Suntharamoorthy Umasuthan,
President, Canadian Tamil Congress

Thai Pongal
The Thanksgiving Festival of Tamils

Thai Pongal is a harvest festival equivalent to Thanksgiving Day and it is celebrated by Tamils across the world. Considered to be one of the oldest harvest festivals, Pongal is said to have originated in the pre-Christian era in Tamil Nadu. In the Tamil language, *pongal* literally means "boiling over" or "spill over". The boiling of milk in a clay pot until it spills over is symbolic of the heart's desire for abundance and prosperity. Celebrated at harvest time, Thai Pongal is traditionally intended to thank the Sun God and farmstead livestock that help create the material abundance.



The Pongal festival falls on the first day of the month of *Thai* of the Tamil calendar (14th or 15th of January according to the Gregorian calendar) and is enveloped by a sense of newness. Celebrated traditionally at harvest time, it is a festival signifying the wealth of food and prosperity associated with the wish for a bountiful harvest. By thanking the rain, sun and the farm animals that contribute to the production of rice, the most staple food of the Tamils, this festival expresses that harmony and inter-dependence between all created realities that make this planet a great place to live and grow.

Pongal is celebrated by the Indian state of Tamil Nadu as well as Tamils worldwide, including those in Sri Lanka, Tamil Eelam, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa, England, USA, Singapore and Canada. Transcending any religious differences, Pongal is celebrated by Tamils of all religious persuasions. During this special time, the household is often filled with excitement and preparation.

A flat square pitch is made and decorated with *kolam* drawings and it is exposed to direct sunlight. Coloured rice flour is used to draw the kolam and it defines the sacred area where the pongal is prepared. A hearth made of natural firewood is set up using three bricks. The cooking begins by placing a clay pot with water on the hearth. A senior member of the family will begin the cooking and the rest of the family dutifully assists him or her. The climax is when the Pongal spills over when cooking. The spill over of milk is a propitious symbol of abundance and good omen and is accompanied by the shouting of "Pongalo Pongal". A member of the family will then ceremoniously put three handfuls of new rice inside the boiling pot.

Other ingredients of this special dish are chakkarai (brown sugar) or katkandu (sugar candy), milk (cow's milk or coconut milk), payaru (roasted green gram), raisins and cashew nuts. When the meal is ready, it is first served on a banana leaf and the family prays for a few minutes to thank the sun, nature and farmers. The pongal is then served with fruits to family, relatives, friends and neighbours.

The richness of Tamil culture and historical traditions is symbolized in the Tamil New Year and Thai Pongal festival. By celebrating this festival, the Tamil Diaspora helps perpetuate our rich culture and traditions. It also gives an emotional link to our kith and kin at home or scattered across the globe.

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL · LE GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL



I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to all those celebrating the Thai Pongal Festival, presented by the Canadian Tamil Congress.

Canadians are fortunate to live in an inclusive society, where a diversity of cultures is recognized and appreciated. The members of the Canadian Tamil Congress deserve our thanks for their efforts to preserve and promote the unique customs of their community. By sharing our traditions with one another, we do more than merely celebrate our differences; we also learn how much we have in common.

It is always a pleasure to see people revel in their heritage. I wish you all a very happy Thai Pongal.

David Johnston

January 2012

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தமிழுயர

அவ்வையும்
வள்ளுவனும்
இன்னபல பெரியோரும்
இவருடனே - எம்
பெற்றவரும்
மற்றவரும்

மண்ணிலும்
கல்லிலும்
ஓலையிலும்
தாளிலுமாய்
எழுதியது ஏராளம்
சிந்தியதும் ஏராளம்!

முத்துக்களாய் - அவர்
சிந்தியதைச்
சேர்த்தெடுத்து
மாலைகளாய் - எம்
மக்களுக்கும்
பேரர் பூட்டருக்கும்
சூட்டி மகிழ்ந்திடுவோம்
அவரும் தமிழரென
அவர் மொழியில்
உரை வைப்போம்

செம்மொழியைக்
கொண்டவராய்ச்
செருக்குடனே
நாமிருப்போம்!

ஏதிலியாய்
எங்கேயோ
நாமிருந்து
வாடினாலும்...

தமிழுயர
நாமுயர்வோம்
தமிழுயர
நாமிணைவோம்!

துரைரத்தினம் துசியந்தன்

அச்சு மற்றும் விளம்பர நிறுவனமொன்றில் பணியாற்றும் இவர், தமிழ்ப் பேச்சு, எழுத்து, கவிதை, நிழற்படம் போன்றவற்றில் ஆர்வமுடையவர். கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவையின் பல தன்னார்வத் தொண்டரில் ஒருவர்.

Ontario

Premier of Ontario - Premier ministre de l'Ontario



January 21, 2012

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extend warm greetings to everyone attending the 5th Annual Gala Dinner, hosted by the Canadian Tamil Congress.

Ontarians are privileged to be able to draw on the cultural diversity that enriches and strengthens the province we are proud to call home.

Thai Pongal celebrates the prosperity that a bountiful harvest brings and marks a time of renewal and fresh beginnings. It is also a time to reflect upon the many blessings we are fortunate to enjoy in Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Tamil community for its contributions to Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

Please accept my best wishes for a memorable Tamil Harvest Festival.

Dalton McGuinty
Premier



Mayor Rob Ford

A Message from the Mayor

It gives me great pleasure to extend greetings and a warm welcome to everyone attending the Thai Pongal Festival and annual gala dinner hosted by the Canadian Tamil Congress.

The Tamil festival of Thai Pongal is a time of great excitement and preparation. It is a thanksgiving event that celebrates the prosperity associated with a bountiful harvest and is a wonderful opportunity for family, friends and devotees to come together in the spirit of togetherness to celebrate this significant occasion.

The City of Toronto's large Tamil community is committed to preserving their rich heritage and traditions. Toronto is a city that allows for the practice of one's religious and cultural traditions without fear of reprisal and we are proud of every organization that works to maintain and promote their culture.

On behalf of Toronto City Council, please accept my best wishes for a memorable and enjoyable festival.

Yours truly,

Rob Ford

Mayor Rob Ford
City of Toronto

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MARKHAM

Frank Scarpitti
Mayor



January 21, 2012

MESSAGE FROM MARKHAM

On behalf of Members of Council and the Town of Markham, I am pleased to extend our best wishes to all those attending the ***"Thai Pongal" Festival and Annual Gala Dinner*** hosted by the Canadian Tamil Congress.

Our community is immeasurably enriched by the diversity of its people and by the special gifts of heritage and culture we each carry within. Thai Pongal, or Harvest Festival is recognized as the most important celebration on the Tamil calendar year and is celebrated around the world. This special Festival celebrates new beginnings and highlights the contributions, achievements and talents of the Tamil Canadian community.

Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, I am unable to attend the 2012 celebration of this ancient festival, but I am pleased that Markham is the first municipality in Canada to proclaim January 13, 14 and 15th Tamil Heritage Days/Thai Pongal (Tamil New Year).

As Mayor, I commend the Canadian Tamil Congress for their efforts to assist new immigrants adapt to life in our country and to help them maintain the values and traditions that so enrich the fabric of our society. Please accept my best wishes for a most successful and enjoyable gala.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Scarpitti

Frank Scarpitti
Mayor

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House of Commons



21 January 2012

Rathika Sitsabaiesan
Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Rouge River

A Personal Message from MP Rathika Sitsabaiesan

To members of the Canadian Tamil Congress on the occasion of the fifth Annual Gala Dinner, I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings.

Thai Pongal is a particularly important time for the Tamil community to come together and celebrate our past achievements and reflect on our future. In the face of great injustice and pain our community has made great strides in protecting our linguistic and cultural identity here in Canada and abroad. Thanks to organizations such as the Canadian Tamil Congress we continue to persevere.

The Canadian Tamil Congress has worked to unite our community here in Canada. It strengthens our voices and adds power to our calls for equality, justice and Human Rights, not just for Tamils, but for all people. Through your political activism, the Tamil Canadian Congress remains a committed leader in pushing for dignity and equal treatment of Tamils here at home and abroad. With your annual Walk-a-thon and your blood donation drives, you mobilize the Tamil community to give back to the Canadian Community that has embraced your noble goals.

As woman of Tamil Heritage and the first elected Member of Parliament of Canada from the Tamil Community, I value your commitment to our mutual goals of equality, justice and human rights. The Canadian Tamil Congress will continue to play a key role in giving voice to the voiceless. I want to congratulate the President, Vice-President, Board of Directors and Members for all your tireless efforts on behalf of your community and I wish you continued success in the coming year.

தமிழ் புத்தாண்டு மற்றும் தைப்பொங்கல் நல்வாழ்த்துக்கள்.

Yours Sincerely,

MP

Rathika Sitsabaiesan, MP
Scarborough Rouge-River

Rathika.Sitsabaieasan@parl.gc.ca

House of Commons
719 Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa ON
K1A 0A6
Tel: 613-996-9681
Fax: 613-996-6643

Constituency
8130 Sheppard Ave. E,
Suite 104
Toronto, ON
M1B 3W3
Tel: 416-298-4224
Fax: 416-298-6035
Toll Free: 1-866-871-4676

Menu

Hors d'Oeuvres

Coconut Shrimp, Spanakopita, Chicken Satays, Asian Spring Rolls

Main Course

Assorted Dinner rolls, flatbreads & breadsticks

Butternut Squash soup

Spicy Jerk Chicken

Cajon Salmon with Spicy Salsa

Rice

Seasonal Mixed Vegetables

Vegetable Strudel

Rice

Seasonal Mixed Vegetables

Dessert:

Tartufo

Coffee & Tea Service

Programme

1
Lighting of Traditional Lamp

2
Canadian National Anthem and Tamil Thai Vazhthu
Ms. Elisabeth Malini

3
Silent Tribute

4
Invocation Dance
Students of Nirothini Pararajasingham

5
President's Address
Mr. Suntharamoorthy Umasuthan

6
Canadian Tamil Congress Presentation
Ms. Kartiga Thavaraj

7
Announcement of Leadership Academy
Mr. Kumar Ratnam

8
Greetings

Councillor Michael Thompson
City of Toronto

Hon. Charles Sousa
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
Government of Ontario

Mr. Chris Alexander, *MP*
Ajax-Pickering
Government of Canada

9
Dinner

10
Dance Performance, Glimpse of Glory
Students of Nirothini Pararajasingham

11
Presentation of Awards

Leaders for Change Award Recipient
Captain ***Gus Dalton***

Service Excellence Award Recipient
the Late ***Hon. Jack Layton***
Acceptance by Councillor Mike Layton

12
Presentation of Cheque to Amnesty International

13
Acceptance Speech
By Alex Neve, Secretary General,
Amnesty International Canada

14
Chief Guest's Address
Mr. M.A.Sumanthiran
Tamil National Alliance,
Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka

15
Vote of Thanks
Ms. Juanita Nathan
Vice President, Canadian Tamil Congress

Master of Ceremonies
Dr. Varagunan Mahadevan

SELECTING PIECES FOR YOUR EQUITY PORTFOLIO PIE

Successful investing, like baking, can be learned. Buying quality stocks from a variety of industries and holding them to grow long term in your portfolio is a smart recipe for investing.



5%	Communication Services
9%	Consumer Discretionary
12%	Consumer Staples
15%	Energy
16%	Financial Services
13%	Health Care
13%	Industrials
11%	Technology
6%	Utilities

Portfolio Pie Ingredients

Does your stock portfolio have the right mix of investments? Does it include the right industries? We believe that diversifying individual stocks over the long term is a key ingredient.

Don't go for just one slice of the pie. Each industry contributes something different to your overall return. We suggest gradually building a portfolio of at least 25 stocks in all nine industries. No single company should be more than 5% of your equity portfolio. An alternative is to own at least 15 stocks with mutual funds to provide diversification. Review our recommended weightings by industry, to the right. Then talk with your Edward Jones advisor about which stocks may be appropriate for your portfolio.

Use Quality Ingredients

Selecting quality companies with good prospects in growing industries is just like baking: By combining the right ingredients in the appropriate quantities, you're more likely to create a successful dish. We believe that the best investment choices for long-term results are companies with good potential for consistent, above-average growth. One of the best predictors of a company's future success is its industry.

Keep Your Balance

Over the long term, we believe diversification is critical for investors in individual stocks. We suggest gradually building a portfolio of stocks that starts with a minimum of five industries and eventually includes all industry groups.

Focus on Long-term Results

Just as baking a pie takes time, your stock investing pie needs time in the market to give you the desired results. When you've developed an investment strategy and chosen quality ingredients in the right amounts, you don't want to disturb it too often. But you also don't want to forget about it. Investments in industries with attractive growth prospects are expected to provide good returns over years, not necessarily in the first days or months. Quality investing takes time but requires periodic checks to be sure everything is on track to meet your goals.

For more information about today's stock recommendations or to arrange a portfolio review, please contact your local Edward Jones advisor.

Diversification does not guarantee a profit or protect against loss.

Raj Thavaratnasingham
Financial Advisor

168 Bennett Road
West Hill, ON M1E 3Y3
416-282-2199

CTC took part in the Gift of Giving

December 22^{nd}, 2011 – Toronto, Ontario



This holiday season, CTC took part in the wonderful gift of giving. Members and volunteers of the Canadian Tamil Congress joined neighbours at the Ellesmere Community Centre to pack Christmas food boxes for more than 300 families in need for the 5^{th} Annual Project Engagement Community Event. The Toronto police, fire, ambulance and several other organizations also participated.

CTC Writes for Rights

December 10^{th}, 2011 – CTC Office, Toronto



On December 10^{th}, 2011, CTC joined thousands of letter writers across Canada and around the world in writing for rights. In commemoration of International Human Rights Day, thousands across the world picked up a pen to write for human rights. CTC did just that on Dec. 10^{th}, at the CTC Office in Toronto. CTC members and supporters, along with their families, read through cases of various human rights violations and expressed their concern in handwritten letters.

Tamil Canadians Walk for Rights and Raise $50,000 for Amnesty International

September 18^{th}, 2011 – Thomson Memorial Park, Scarborough



Thousands of Tamil Canadians and friends joined the 2011 Tamil Canadian walk-a-thon in support of Amnesty International, a worldwide movement of people dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights. Hundreds of people passionate about human rights including youth groups, seniors groups, families and circles of friends, joined at Thomson Memorial Park, in Scarborough, for a 5km walk, which ended with a cake cutting ceremony to celebrate Amnesty's 50^{th} Anniversary. Amnesty International's Secretary General, Alex Neve, addressed the enthusiastic crowd as well as other guests in attendance. The walk-a-thon proved to be another successful event helping CTC create a legacy of volunteerism and philanthropy within our community.

Legal Counsel for CTC Participates in UN Human Rights Council 18th Session on Behalf of Lawyers Rights Watch Canada

September 12-15th, 2011 – United Nations, Geneva

On behalf of Lawyers Rights Watch Canada, Gary Anandasangaree addressed the UN Human Rights Council during its 18th session in Geneva. The Human Rights Council was urged to act swiftly to bring about justice in Sri Lanka, the first step of which is to adopt the recommendations of the Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka. Gary is also Legal Counsel for CTC and is an avid advocate for human rights and democracy. He and his colleagues at LRWC have been actively involved in UN lobbying and advocacy efforts on the international level.

Tamil Canadians Remember a Great Friend and Canadian; Jack Layton

August 26th, 2011 – Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto



On August 22nd, 2011, the Canadian nation woke up to shocking news of the death of the Honourable Jack Layton, leader of the federal New Democratic Party of Canada. Jack, was a great friend and supporter to CTC. To Tamil Canadians, Jack was more than a parliamentarian; he was a dear friend who supported us during difficult times and often engaged with community members to gain a better understanding of their concerns. On August 26th, 2011, there was a sea of orange as hundreds of Tamil Canadians gathered at Nathan Phillip's Square in honour of Jack's memory. Jack will forever be in the hearts of Tamil Canadians.

CTC Holds Legal Defense Dinner

August 20th, 2011 – La Gondala Banquet Hall, Concord



CTC filed a lawsuit against Rohan Gunaratne, the so-called expert, who has been used as the primary weapon to discredit and tarnish the Tamil Diaspora. CTC took the first step to challenge the newspaper and Rohan Gunaratne himself legally to put a stop to any plan of discrediting or tarnishing the Tamil Diaspora. The Legal Defense Dinner was held to raise funds for the legal costs associated with the lawsuit and was attended by many community and business supporters.

CTC Honours the Rescuers who Saved 155 Tamil Refugees

August 11th, 2011 – St. John's, Newfoundland

CTC organized a dinner to honour the crew of the Atlantic Reaper, for their efforts in rescuing the 155 Tamil refugees off the coast of St.

Getting involved rewards us all.



We are proud to support the **Canadian Tamil Congress** and are committed towards helping the Tamil Canadian community achieve success and prosperity.

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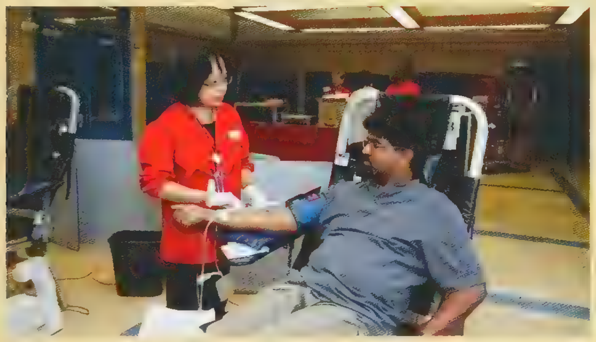
1-800-551-8938



Shotts, Newfoundland, on August 11th, 1986. Captain Gus Dalton of the Atlantic Reaper and his crew, saved the 155 refugees stranded at sea without the necessities of life. CTC celebrated the rescuers and thanked Canada for embracing the refugees with open arms. Today, 25 years later, these proud Canadians are contributing citizens of this country.

CTC's 4th Annual Blood Donation Drive

July 30th, 2011



The Canadian Tamil Congress held various clinics throughout the year in support of its 4th Annual Blood Donation Drive. As Tamil Canadians, we can truly appreciate the opportunity this wonderful country has presented to us. Through our blood donation drives, we are able to give back to our Canadian community as we recognize the dire need of such services through the bloodshed of our loved ones during Sri Lanka's civil war. In partnering with Canadian Blood Services, CTC strives to work together to provide a service that we know is vital to save the lives of many Canadians.

Vanishing Voices Exhibit: CTC Remembers Black July '83

July 28th, 2011 – Hart House, University of Toronto

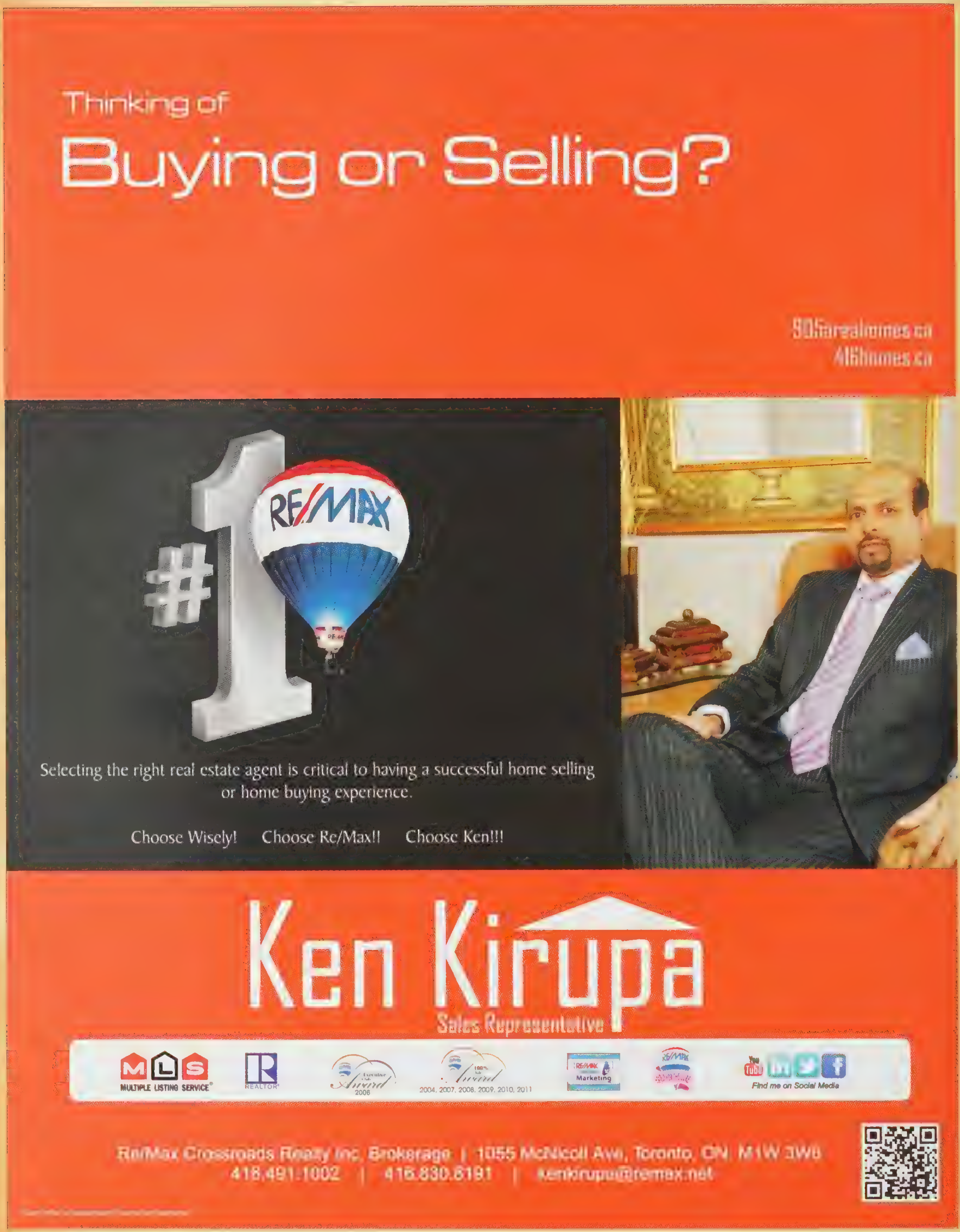


CTC co-hosted Vanishing Voices Exhibit in remembrance of Black July '83 in collaboration with Tamil Students Association at University of Toronto St. George Campus. The event was held at the prestigious Hart House at University of Toronto. The exhibit chronicled the turbulent history of Sri Lanka, from the political scene during the British colonization through to the recurring episodes of discrimination, persecution, and violence over the following decades. The exhibit provided an unique opportunity for hundreds of visitors from all walks of life to experience and gain a fresh perspective on the Sri Lankan narrative, an understanding of the history of their fellow Tamil Canadians and a lasting impression on the resilience of the human spirits. 28 years later, we still remember.

CTC Joins Pride Parade in Toronto

July 3rd, 2011 – Downtown Toronto

On July 3rd, 2011, CTC celebrated Canada's


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diversity by marching in the 31st annual Pride Parade. Held in downtown Toronto, the event drew tens of thousands of residents from all across Canada. In show of its support and by marching in the Pride Parade, CTC encouraged everyone to have an open, tolerant and supportive attitude. The parade is also about celebrating diversity and the variety of life while respecting subtle differences amongst Canada's citizens and visitors, and creating an inclusive experience for all.

CTC Joins FeTNA in South Carolina and Sends a Delegation to the 24th Annual Conference

July 2-4th, 2011 – Charleston, South Carolina

In an ongoing effort to strengthen the ties with Tamils from South India and other parts of the world, CTC became a member of the Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA) in early 2010. FeTNA is a non-profit, literary, educational, cultural, charitable, secular and non-partisan organization bringing together over 40 prominent Tamil organizations across North America. CTC members attended the conference, which was packed with programs and break away sessions with a focus on promoting the Tamil language, identity and culture.

Tamil Canadian Community Marches in Canada Day Parade

July 1st, 2011 – Milne Park, Markham

Tamil Canadians celebrated Canada Day in style with hundreds of Canadians. Waving Canadian flags, community members marched in the Canada Day Parade in Markham. CTC's large float had several children dressed in



traditional clothing and community members celebrating Canada day. The event was filled with colourful floats, various games and activities for children and an eventful night full of music and dancing.

Press Conference on Parliament Hill

June 14th, 2011 – Parliament Hill, Ottawa



Prompted by Channel 4's frank and heartbreaking broadcast, "Sri Lanka's killing Fields", which was telecasted on June 14th, 2011, a press conference was organized on Parliament Hill. Elected members of parliament, community and human rights groups spoke to the importance of Canada joining the group of countries urging the United Nations to establish an independent investigation into war crimes committed in Sri Lanka. CTC was instrumental in organizing this press conference in the Canadian Parliament, together with NDP MP Rathika Sitsabaiesan and Amnesty

"There is nothing more glorious than to persist, in the advancement of the Community." - Thirukural 1021

International.

CTC Announces Amnesty International as Recipient of 3rd Annual Walk

June 9th, 2011 – Scarborough Civic Centre

During the official launch, CTC announced that Amnesty International, a worldwide movement of people dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights, is the chosen recipient for the 2011 Tamil Canadian Walk-a-Thon. In celebration of Amnesty's 50th Birthday and the very important work Amnesty engages in, Tamil Canadians announced that they will come together to walk in solidarity in support of human rights all over the world.

CTC Supports Benefit for the Tamil Studies Conference

May 1st, 2011 – Hart House, University of Toronto

On May 1st, 2011, CTC joined Friends of Tamil Studies Conference at the Hart House, University of Toronto for a benefit raising funds for the annual Tamil Studies Conference. All proceeds from the reception went towards the 2011 Tamil Studies Conference which brought together Tamil studies scholars, artists, writers and activists from North America, Central America, Europe, South Asia and Australasia.

CTC Plants Hundreds of Trees for Earth Day

May 1st, 2011 – Bob Hunter Memorial Park, Markham

With shovels and buckets in hand, over a hundred CTC volunteers and Tamil Canadian community members joined "10,000 Trees for the Rouge" in planting thousands of trees to revitalize the Rouge Valley. Over the past 22 years, the annual spring tree-planting event has reclaimed more than 158 acres of fragile watershed lands and planted over 155,000 trees!

All Party Candidate Meeting

April 27th, 2011 – Scarborough Global Kingdom Ministry Hall



Just a few days before Canadians went to cast their votes, 13 federal candidates from the Conservative, Liberal, NDP and Green parties met in Scarborough to win over constituents from their respective ridings. The event, organized by CTC and the Toronto Chapter of the Chinese Canadian National Council, was aimed to generate more voter participation in the Tamil Canadian and Chinese Canadian communities in the vote-rich GTA.

CTC Montreal Hosts Annual Gala Dinner

March 12th, 2011 – Montreal, Quebec



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CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANT

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Nimal Vinayagamoorthy, CGA

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Cell: 416-888-1128

Fax: 416-613-2739

Email: nimal@nlraccounting.com

2525 Pharmacy Ave, Toronto, ON M1W 2K2



Hundreds of people flocked the UCC Reception Hall in Montreal as chief guest Justice Trudeau, Liberal MP for the riding of Papineau addressed a full house audience and urged the attendees to start thinking about the type of country they want to build and start expecting more from the leaders. The event also showcased some of the local talents and recognized some outstanding Tamil Canadians from the Montreal area for their contribution to the broader community. The event was well attended by politicians from various levels of government and political parties.



CTC Hosts 4th Annual Thai Pongal Dinner

January 22nd, 2011

The chief guest of the evening, the former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and former Member of Parliament for Etobicoke-Lakesore, Michael Ignatieff enthusiastically addressed the crowd. Mr. Ignatieff received a standing ovation from the packed house of 1,000 guests. CTC awarded its first Leaders for Change award to Mr. Armand LaBarge, Former York Regional Police Services. As part of CTC's ongoing commitment to volunteerism and promoting community involvement, CTC also honoured the contribution of Ms. Barbara Jackman, the recipient of the Service Excellence award.

Pongal Vizha
The Thanksgiving Festival of Tamils



Today the Tamils celebrate many festivals such as *Chittiraip Pirappu*, *Aadip Pirappu*, *Navarathiri*, *Sivarathiri*, *Deepavali*, *Pongal Vizha*, Good Friday and Christmas. However, several centuries prior to the origin of other festivals, Tamils have been celebrating *Pongal Vizha* which can be traced all the way back to 2500 years. We can see the information about *Pongal Vizha* in the *Sangam* Literatures which were written between 300 B.C-300 A.D.

Purananooru (verse 168) one of the *Sangam* Tamil poetic work highlights the celebration of *Pongal Vizha*. In this poem, the inhabitants of the Kurinji lands go to sleep being aware of the fact that they need to plow the fields the next day. That night a horde of hogs ravage the farmers' fields by eating the *kaanthal* roots. When the farmers awoke the next morning they saw that their fieldwork had already been completed for them. Thus they planted the seeds and waited for the crops to grow. After the crops are grown, they are harvested and made into rice. In front of their house, the farmers start a hearth fire using sandalwood and place a giant pot over it, in which they pour fresh cow milk and as it boils they add fresh rice and make *Pongal*. The *Pongal* is then served on banana leaves under an arbour of jasmine and the family and relatives share in the feast.

The ancient Tamils believed that sun provided warmth and caused rainfalls, which are essential in growing and harvesting crops. In addition to this, they also saw that cattle played an important role in the cultivation of crops. Under the intention of gratitude and to honor and thank both the sun and cattles the *Pongal Vizha* was created.

Pongal Vizha is the equivalent of Canadian Thanksgiving Day and is held on the first day of the Tamil month of Thai (January) when farmers harvest paddy. *Pongal* means, "to boil" rice mixed with milk, brown sugar and spices. *Vizha* means Festival. *Pongal Vizha* is secular in nature. Today, there are over 80 million Tamils celebrating *Pongal Vizha* around the globe.

Pongal Vizha is not a one day event but rather occupies a week of celebrations. On the last day of *Markazhi* (December) is *Pokip Pongal*, on the first of *Thai* (January) is *Perum Pongal*, on the second is *Paddip Pongal*, and on the third of Thai is *Kaanum Pongal*. Even today we can see this type of weeklong celebration take place in the villages of Tamil Nadu. However, in Sri Lanka it is only celebrated for two days.

On *Pokip Pongal* it is customary to clean the house entirely and discard unwanted things to start afresh. In addition to this, the house is also white washed and decorated. Neem leaves are also hung from many places around the house. During the evening, new rice, brown sugar and neem leaves are mixed to create refreshing desserts. This dessert is offered to *Inthiran* (the god of rain). It is relevant to point out here that the Tamil epic *Silapathikaram* features a chapter on *Inthira vizha*.

On *Perum Pongal* it is customary to shower very early in the morning and wear new clothes. The floor decorations are done in front of the home and a *Nirai kudam* (auspicious pot) is placed in the middle. A hearth fire is then created and a clay pot is placed over it. Ginger and tamarind leaves are tied around the neck of the pot itself.

Milk is then poured into the pot. As the sun rises, the milk will start boiling and at this moment the phrase *"pongalo-pongal"* is shouted as fresh rice is put into the pot. Additional ingredients such as brown sugar, plums, cardamoms and cashew nuts are also added for flavor and sweetness. After it is cooked, it is then presented as an offering on a banana leaf to the sun. Other crops grown on the field such as mangoes, oranges, bananas, sugar cane, coconuts and jack fruit are also placed in this offering. The family then gathers and feasts on the *Pongal*. It is also a tradition to visit relatives and friends and offer them *Pongal* and blessings on this day.



Just like on the day of the *Perum Pongal*, there will be a similar *Pongal* creation on the day of *Paddip Pongal*. However, instead of shouting *"pongalo-pongal"* another slogan *"Paanai pongivarap paddi perugivara"* (like the overflowing boiling pot so the cattle multiply) is uttered. On this day, the cows are bathed and decorated in addition to having a garland placed around their necks. The cows are given *Pongal*, gruel, fruits and refreshments to eat. The cows are also not given any work on this day and it is considered their holiday.

On *Kaanum Pongal* day, there will be *Pongal* and refreshments, but instead of eating the *Pongal* and refreshments at home, members of the community will gather in a common place such as playground or beach to feast. At this gathering, food will be exchanged by the members of the community. In the evening the women engage in cultural activities such as *Kolaaddam and Kummi*. The males will engage in what is considered "martial sports" such as bullfight and *Sarukkumaram Eral*.

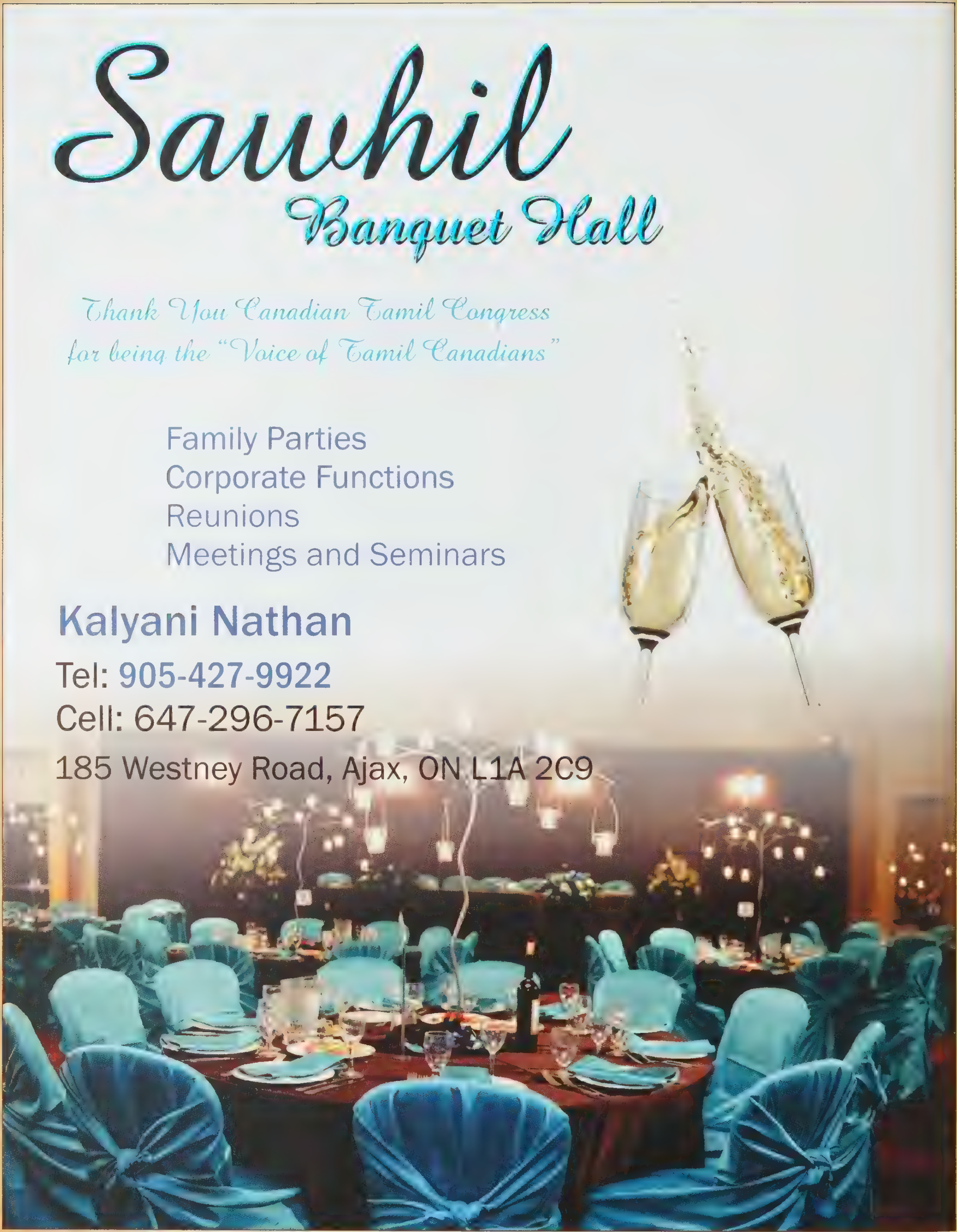
"Thai piranthal vazhi pirakkum" is a Tamil proverb, which means "When January dawns, new paths will open". In the villages of Tamil Nadu a strong focus of critical life events revolve around Pongal festival. It can be seen that someone looking to renovate his or her home for example, will do it closer to *Pongal*. Another example would be if someone still has yet to settle a loan, they would do it before *Pongal*. A wife asking her husband for jewelry to be given to their daughter will receive a response of waiting until *Pongal* for it to happen. Finally, asking someone when he or she will be embarking on a religious pilgrimage will yield the same answer of being "after *Pongal*".

Pongal vizha has spread outside of Tamil Land into various other regions in South-East Asia. For example in Japan their harvesting festival and New Year falls on the same day as the *Tamil Pongal Vizha*. During their celebration they yell *"Kongo-Kongo"* and Gakushuin University linguistics professor Susumu Ohno describes this originating from *"pongalo-pongal"*. He goes on to say that the festival and the phrase both came from Tamil Nadu.

Avvai Kugathasan

is a university student. She is interested in Tamil language and culture. She enjoys community work and writing.

Today *Pongal vizha* is rather under-appreciated in contrast to Aryan as well as Western festivals. Under these circumstances, it is vital that this ancient tradition, which serves as a crucial part of Tamil culture, should receive more attention from both the Tamil media as well as Tamil people.


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Canadian Tamil Congress Walks for Rights

In the past, the Canadian Tamil Congress has coordinated fundraising efforts for many great organizations such as Sick Kids Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society, always with a great amount of enthusiasm and support from the community. This year, in partnership with many organizations within the Tamil community, we chose to dedicate our efforts towards an organization everyone can identify with, an organization that strikes a chord with all of us, an organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights - Amnesty International.



Amnesty International, founded by British lawyer Peter Benenson in 1961, operates with the mission "to conduct research and generate action to prevent and end grave abuses of human rights and to demand justice for those whose rights have been violated". It is an organization funded entirely by private donations. No funding is received nor accepted from any government.

Many within the Tamil Canadian community and the Canadian community at large, have been directly and or indirectly affected by Amnesty International's good work, including their sustained efforts calling for an investigation into human rights violations in Sri Lanka, urging the United Nations to investigate Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse. It has called on the Sri Lankan government to immediately release thousands of people currently held in detention without charge or trial. Most recently, Amnesty has played an instrumental role in calling for a UN probe of war crimes committed during the latter stages of the civil war in Sri Lanka as exposed in the Channel 4 news video, and for those findings to be made public.

The Tamil Canadian community believes in upholding the fundamental Canadian values of equality and justice for all, free of prejudice. We celebrate these rights, often taken for granted in many countries, including Sri Lanka.

More than 1,000 walkers and participants gathered at Thomson Memorial Park for the third annual Tamil Canadian Walk. Participants walked 5km alongside a police escort from the Toronto Police Services (Divisions 41 and 43). At the park, families enjoyed hot dogs, burgers and a huge birthday cake celebrating Amnesty's 50th birthday. Wonderful volunteers set up numerous booths for face painting, arts & crafts and carnival games – a very successful event from all accounts.

CTC walked for rights on September 18th, 2011 and with the assistance of community members and generous supporters, $50,000 was raised for Amnesty International – an outstanding achievement.

Priya Jeganathan

Co-chaired the walk-a-thon committee and is an active volunteer with CTC

Pongal

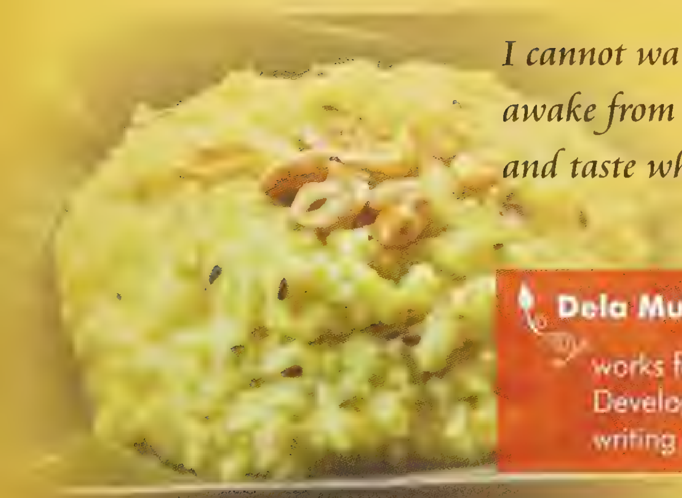
I cannot wait to greet the sun
the sound of Amma sifting rice,
her humble hands embrace a tradition

of Tamil people around the world, celebrating
the harvest festival

cashews and raisins bump their heads,
ghee glides over and under
lapping the pan,

soon the aroma completes our home,
Amma closes her eyes,
pouring prayers into the pot

I cannot wait for Amma to say,
awake from your slumber
and taste what I have made.



Dela Muhundarajah
works for the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre, she enjoys writing fiction and poetry.

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Tamil Heritage Month Proclamation



The month of January has been chosen as Tamil Heritage Month for several reasons. The Pongal festival is the most important and widely-celebrated festival amongst Tamils worldwide. This ancient auspicious celebration of thanksgiving allows one to reflect on the blessings of a past year and take time to look forward to the start of a new year. The first month of the Tamil calendar, Thai, begins in the middle of January on Thai Pongal day.

Thai Pongal is celebrated by all Tamils irrespective of their religious beliefs. Thai Pongal is primarily a harvest festival of thanksgiving, offering thanks to the sun and farm animals for a fruitful season of farming and a profitable harvest. It is a time when the community gathers together and shares in their blessings through celebrations.

Thai Pongal is the first day of the year in the Tamil calendar which has been calculated based on the birth of Thiruvalluvar, a celebrated poet and philosopher by Tamils all over the world. This Thai Pongal as per the Tamil calendar marks the year 2043.

The rich Tamil heritage has been preserved for thousands of years and continues to be the prime medium for the preservation and exploration of the Tamil heritage. Archaeological evidence suggests the Tamil language is the oldest of all Dravidian languages and has been in existence for as long as 5000 years.

Tamil Heritage Month serves as a month for Tamils to celebrate their culture, traditions, history, literature and festivities, providing both young Tamils and the mainstream community an opportunity to learn about and preserve the rich heritage of Tamils. It is essential for Tamils to be educated about their Tamil heritage and for the richness of the history to be preserved and protected for future generations. Tamil Heritage Month was initiated in January 2010 for the preservation of the Tamil culture amongst the large Tamil Diaspora in Canada. January was ultimately chosen to be Tamil Heritage month due to two significant festivities occurring during this time, Thai Pongal and Tamil New Year.

On December 13th, 2011 Markham Council became the very first municipality in Canada to officially proclaim January 13, 14 and 15 as 'Tamil Heritage Days, Tamil New year and Thai Pongal". This historic effort was immediately followed by the Town of Pickering and City of Ajax declaring the entire month of January as Tamil Heritage Month.

Overall, Thai Pongal is a festival that encourages social cohesiveness, uniting Tamils through a common cultural heritage, which transcends their religious affiliations. Tamils living in Canada, numbering over 300,000 hope that city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the Federal Government will follow in Markham's leadership and also proclaim January as Tamil Heritage Month.

Juanita Nathan

is a York Region District School Board Trustee and is also the Vice-President of the Canadian Tamil Congress.

Why 2012 Will Be An Important Year for Tamils

2012 is going to be an important year for Tamils. Upon reading that statement I am sure many would wonder why that would be the case. Would we be celebrating an important milestone of some sort? Is there a cultural significance to this year? Well, this year has already been significant in some ways. This year, the town of Markham and the city of Pickering have recognized Tamil Heritage Days. The town of Ajax and the city of Toronto have proclaimed the whole month of January as Tamil Heritage Month. That is an important accomplishment on the part of Tamil Canadians. But, the importance of that accomplishment would fade in comparison to the actual reason as to why this year is going to be significant for Tamils around the world.

The reason why this year is important has a lot to do with what happened in Sri Lanka a little more than two years ago. A brutal civil war that ravaged what used to be the pearl of the Indian Ocean for close to three decades came to an abrupt end, and in the process, landed the two parties involved, namely the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, in the cross hairs of the United Nations Human Rights Council as well as other human rights watch dogs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Both groups stand accused of having committed gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

Many western countries including the United States and Great Britain were quick to add their voices to the United Nations and other human rights organizations in calling for an independent inquiry into examining what transpired during the final stages of the war. The Canadian government, initially reluctant to lend their support, as they seemed to buy into the Sri Lankan government's argument that it was an internal issue and that they would themselves come up with a mechanism to exert justice and find reconciliation with the Tamil people, has now changed its stance. After more than two years of failed internal inquiries and reports in which the Government of Sri Lanka and their armed forces always came out as being saviours of the Tamil people, the Canadian government now seems to have decided that they've had enough. The Prime Minister has now openly said that he would boycott the next Commonwealth summit if it were to be held in Sri Lanka because of the Sri Lankan regime's unwillingness to allow an external investigation.

For the past two years, many individuals and organizations have been working hard to ensure that Sri Lanka and the issue of accountability for the actions that caused a tremendous loss of innocent civilian lives, stays on the U.N. agenda. However, this is going to be a very trying year for all those involved as this may be the year where a decision might be made on how to go about dealing with the issue of accountability in Sri Lanka. Although it is not going to guarantee anything in the form of a trial and convictions for those responsible for the atrocities any time soon, at least it will give us hope that justice will be served someday. After all, when we look at what has happened in the past, we can see that the process of getting justice sometimes runs its own course. A lot of

past human rights abuses such as what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia is only in the courts now. Leon Mugesera, who was found to have been culpable in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, was ordered to be deported back from Canada to Rwanda to stand trial earlier this year.
However, in an ever shrinking world, we are pressed to deal with such issues from all over the world and also have to compete with those issues to gain some attention for ours. One of the regions of the world that has cast a huge shadow over the human rights abuses committed against the Tamils in Sri Lanka is the Middle East. With the beginning of the Arab Spring revolutions in many countries last year, there is a risk that the Tamil issue may become lost as yesterday's news.

One of the reasons that the issue of what happened in Sri Lanka has some momentum is due to the way the war was brought to an end. The Sri Lankan government is accused of having used excessive force that resulted in an unnecessary loss of innocent civilian lives. The civilized world is worried that the Sri Lankan way of quelling rebellions would become the norm. That is not in any way an unrealistic fear. We were able to see in the case for Libya how Col. Muammar Gaddafi began to use his own troops in an attempt to continue his dictatorship amidst a call for his resignation by rebels. In the early stages of the rebellion, when he was asked why he was using his fighter planes to drop bombs on his own people, he is quoted as having said that it wasn't his people that were rebelling against him; that his people loved him and they have no quarrels with him. He blamed Al Quada for the rebellion and said that it was necessary to use the force he was using to quell the rebellion against him.

He could just easily have taken a page from the Sri Lankan version of what went down in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has for the longest time used the same rhetoric as well. The Tamil people living on that island have no quarrel with them. They co-exist throughout the country peacefully. The only people who have issues with their way of governing was the LTTE and if they were to be destroyed then there would be lasting peace in the county. We all know what the true cost of that version was.

With the demise of Col. Gaddafi there are questions about what happened there. In Syria too, there are people revolting against Syria's dictator and there too you could see the dictator using his own troops against his people. The calls have already started to build for a case for human rights abuses that occurred in the midst of the power struggle between Col. Gaddafi and the rebels that wanted to see him thrown out of power. The same goes for calls against the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Mario Pushparatnam

has been an active volunteer at the Canadian Tamil Congress and is on the Board of Directors for the Markham Tamil Organization.

We have a limited window of opportunity to ensure that justice is served; to ensure that something is done at the level of the UNHRC to institute an investigative mechanism as to what happened during the final tragic stages of Sri Lanka's bloody ethnic conflict. To bring those that were responsible for the gross human rights violations and those that had a direct hand in causing such a huge and unnecessary loss of lives, are brought to trial and eventually to justice.

2012 will be an important year for all Tamils around the world.

Giving the Gift of Life

CTC helps Canadian Blood Services provide blood to those in need

A nation with open arms that welcomes immigrants and refugees from all over the world has truly become a multicultural home. With our roots intact, we share the pride that this new home has brought to us. With love for this nation, comes the responsibility to give back and ensure that it continues to grow.



The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) has done an outstanding job in providing the Tamil Canadian community an opportunity to give back to this nation through partnering with the Canadian Blood Services through its Partners for Life program. Since 2008, CTC has participated in and led many blood donor clinics across the Greater Toronto Area and to date, Tamil Canadians have donated more than 15,000 units. For the wonderful accomplishments and contributions made, CTC was honoured as the top Community Partner for Central Region at the national event "Honouring Our Lifeblood" in Ottawa on September 20, 2010.

This year, I had the privilege to join the Blood Donation Campaign team as one of the coordinators and work alongside an awesome team. Having worked in the health care sector for the past few years, it is clearly evident that an ongoing and reliable blood supply is vital. This past year, the Tamil Canadian community has made tremendous amount of blood donations and helped save the lives of many. On July 30th, 2011, CTC organized the "Fourth Annual Blood Donation Drive" at Agincourt Community Centre in remembrance of Black July '83. Many dedicated Tamil Canadians showed up and donated. I was truly inspired by their voluntary act of coming forth to donate. The donors shared a wonderful feeling of giving the gift of life and contributing to the well-being of our fellow citizens.

This is only the beginning of this great initiative and we at CTC are looking forward to the upcoming year to surpass our goal of donating more than 500 units and continue to spread awareness about the benefits of donating blood and the need for blood supply in today's society.

Tharini Tharmalingam

is currently pursuing her Masters in Social Work and is a volunteer of CTC.

To those interested in donating, please contact CTC at 416-240-0078 or Canadian Blood Services at 1-888-2-DONATE to book an appointment. We kindly request that when you donate, to register under Group Name: Tamil Canadians and Partner for Life **ID #: CANA009345.**

Here's to the New Year and continuing to believe in the gift of life. A warm thank you to all our donors and those who will be joining us hand in hand moving forward in this Blood Donation Campaign!

Baggage Claim

With her maroon colored Mysore sari wrapped tight around her bodyline. She arrived at a crowded nameless, random airport. Far West. Far, too far for her to imagine. Far, too far for her to grasp. Far, too far for her to understand. Her locality on a compass. Her distance on a global map. Her status in a statistic. Her situation on a global index. And her plight in a newspaper.

With her children in her arm. And their toys in their hands. Her eyes and mouth gasped for the husband she came for. But was met by the police she ran away from. She pressed tight, so tight. Too tight. The hands of her children. And hurt their fragile palms and fingers. Through the fear and agony. Drawn on her face. The insecurity and its palpability. That evoked tears in their young brown eyes. Of being caught and send back.

And return to the un-returnable.

Together. The three of them.

Were led to a room in grey. That read immigration office at its desk. Where mothers were separated. From their screaming children. Their begging voices. And their beating hearts. Tied to their children.

Uninviting and unwelcoming. She left. And arrived. To sit down. In an empty room. With nothing but two chairs. A table. A mirror. And dizzling light. Titled: interrogation room.

Whilst her luggage continued to turn lone rounds. On the emptied baggage claim. Abandoned. In an airport. In the Far West. Waiting. And waiting. To be claimed. Remembered and repossessed.

Through the reflection of the mirror in front of her she saw herself. For the first time ever since. She braided her hair in front of her bedroom mirror. In another empty room. Where life has disappeared from long before her body left. Where joy has vanished from long before her husband fled.

Where corpses laid around long before the dead arrived. 63 hours ago.

Before she left behind the world she was situated in. And circulated in. In safety and gravity. In fear and insecurity. Like a satellite in a derailed universe. And a ship without anchor. Vulnerable to the omnipresent Shiva. Whose planetary constellation has changed. Her sun and moon cycle. Her sweat and blood flow. Whose dance of rage moved salangais and mridangams . Planets and suns. As well as tanks and regiments.

Rhythmic dances to a rhythmic beat. Of bomb - and gunshots. Shiva's dance. His devotees waltz. Along his lethal rhythm. In their little kovil. Into their little graveyard. Their divine and ancient world.

And her home. For 27 years.

Before she dared to cross holy borders. Drawn by Gods not men. Drawn by water not land. Kala paani. Black water. And red oceans. That have swallowed crops and corpses. Long before she was born. To be purified from the impurity that colored her home in red. And bodies in black.

To be diseased with the melancholy. And be infected with the guilt. Of the betrayers. Escapees. Exilees. Survivors.

Who have left home for life. And fled from life for death. Afar from home.

Her fingers wiped away the tears from her round

cheeks. From the face of a mother who has secured the lives of her children. The wife who has followed her husband's path to security. The daughter who has left behind her ageing parents. The sister who had fled without knowing the whereabouts of her siblings. The friend who disappeared without leaving a trace. The woman who never turned around. To look into the eyes of the devastation of life and the living. The human who dreamed to return in peace. And left with war. Occupying, destroying and raging her mind and heart. Her memories of home.

Pale, colorless, but with a blood red pottu on her forehead and a blood trenched kunkumum strip between the roots of her parted hair. Like traces of blood from a battle she fled from. A battle she forgot to fight. In fear and despair. And left. Without a word. She sat in front of the border agent.

Feeling her dry skin. Moisted by tears and sweat. Fears and traumas. Vulnerability and insecurity. Of facing men in uniform. Of facing men of war and death. Rape and torture.

With guns and anger - not pens and papers.

Sheets of papers. Words and memories. Witness and testimony. Trial and judgment. Accused and accuser. Prosecuted and prosecutor. Judged and Judge. On life and death. Asylum and deportation. War and melancholia. Loss and suffering. Despair and plight. Despair in plight. In this vicious circle. Called life.

Fears of being labeled. Stamped. Of being shoved off shore. Again and again. Into another kala paani. Into another boat and plane. To be forced to return to the un-returnable. To be forced to abandon. On repeat. To leave behind. On repeat. To repeat and repeat. Actions and reactions. To be caught up.

And abandon her husband. And luggage. Her dreams. Hopes. And imagination of the unimaginable. Of peace and security. Of rights, dignity and life.

Her nightmares of bleeding to death. In pain and agony. With her wrists cut. And the picture of her children and husband. Next to her face. To color their faces with tears and blood. And fall asleep in their sight. To never forget. And never be forgotten.

In this airport Far West. Far, too far from her abandoned mother, father, siblings and friends. Far too far from her abandoned husband and children. Far, too far from her abandoned home.

Far, too far to return in death. Far, too far to find peace in death. In the lagoon, ocean and gulf of her ancestors.

Abandoned lives. And abandoned bags. Waiting. In this endless baggage claim. For someone to return. For someone to arrive.
For something to change.

Caught up in this system. And mechanism. Without individual control. That manages and dictates. Life and death. Of the desperate and needy. Of the impoverished and war torn. Of the unprivileged and unaccepted. Unwanted and unneeded. Of humanity's inhumanity. Its ugly face. Covered and disguised. The factory of life and the living. Of death and the dead. On a mass scale. To produce and reproduce. Its mass product.

That remained unreleased and unpublished.
For hearts to beat in fear.

In an endless cycle.

Waiting.


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For abandoned bags circling on baggage claims in nameless airports. For husbands waiting in anxiety in nameless arrival terminals. For children sobbing the names of their nameless mothers. For relatives to fearfully and hopefully reading the news for stories about their nameless relatives.

Waiting for her.

Waiting for them.

Praying for her.

Praying for them.

To appear.

In her maroon colored.

Mysore sari.

With her tired children.

And her luggage held tight.

As well as tearful eyes.

To trespass this nameless border

Of this nameless airport

In this nameless country

That reads:

Welcome.
Welcome back to life.

Sinthujan Varatharajah

is an aspiring poet and graduate student in Race, Ethnicity and Postcolonial Studies (MSc) at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The Little Boats of Newfoundland

"When the little boats go out to sea,
From the shores of Newfoundland,
God, do me a favour,
you guide them with your hand;
Protect them from the dangers
and the fury of the sea,
For those little boats of Newfoundland,
Lord, mean the world to me"



"The Little Boats of Newfoundland" is a song often sang by sailors who go out to brave the rough Atlantic Ocean in order to make a days wage. Many a times, these little boats would come back empty handed, and at times, they may not even come back. On August 11, 1986, four little boats from Newfoundland discovered 155 Tamil refugees who were off the shore of St.Shotts, clinging onto their lives. That moment sealed, and forever, intertwined Tamil-Canadian history to that of the beautiful people of Newfoundland, and Canada.

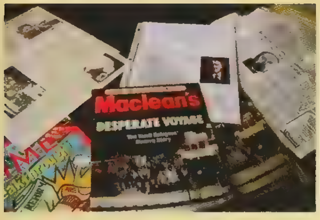
Tamils, like many peoples before, and many after them, came to Canada seeking a better life. They were refugees originally from Sri Lanka, who were exiled in Europe, and then took an arduous journey across the Atlantic for a permanent settlement in Canada. They travelled on board the Regina Maris, and were dropped off the coast of St. Shotts, Newfoundland, on two 35 foot lifeboats, with one engine, some lifejackets, and a small supply of food. They were crammed in the life boats for close to three days. They were desperate, and many thought they would never make it to shore. Some contemplated suicide, some fell sick, and some were just plain hungry.

Augustus (Gus) Dalton was a life long fisherman, and at 55 in 1986, saw the world through the lens of a fisherman. Gus was born in the community of Mosquito in the Colinet Islands off St. Mary's Bay. His family was resettled on Admiral's Beach in the 1950's, a few years after Newfoundland joined Confederation. Gus is the simplest of human beings: he helped others, strangers, family, and friends without any expectation of reward. In his 80's now, Gus is still full of life, and his eyes full of compassion. It was no surprise to his three daughters, and his wife Margaret, that their father and husband, would become the symbol of Canadian generosity and a savior to 155 Tamils, all of whom have settled and become contributing citizens of this great country.

Late afternoon on the August 11th, 1986, Gus Dalton, the captain of the Atlantic Reaper, and his crew, comprising Thomas Power, John McEvoy, and Joe Mulroney, saw what appeared to be two lifeboats, with people screaming for help. Instinctively, Gus called for the boats in the area, and three of them responded: the Mona Dee, Beckford, and the Mary Theresa. During this time, Gus emptied his boat of his catch, costing thousands of dollars in lost revenue, in order to make way for the women, children, and the sick so that they could be temporarily housed. They emptied their supply, and gave hope and meaning to those who arrived. The other three little boats did the same, until the Coast Guard, Leonard Crawley, finally came to the rescue several hours later.

Once ashore, the Tamil refugees were treated


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with dignity and housed at Memorial University, and flown to Montreal and Toronto to join the relatively small Tamil-Canadian population that were waiting to greet them. Each of these men, women, and children, have built beautiful lives in their new home. They have created jobs, created wealth, and a sense of community. One of the young girl is now a Doctor, and many of the children of these men and women are at universities, and colleges, making their own strides in their home.

Yet, this could have all gone so wrong, if it wasn't for Gus and his colleagues. These 155 Tamil refugees could have perished at sea, like the number 493 of the MV Sun Sea, or the many boats that have capsized in Asia, bound for places like Australia. The risky voyage by sea is not a desirable route to places like Canada – however, the risk of not fleeing for their safety leaves very little choice for those who must escape turmoil. The arrival of the 1986 Tamil boat people brought the best and worst in Canadians.

Many shouted foul, suggesting that Tamils are jumping the queue, they are by-passing the formal immigration system and they are taking advantage of Canadian generosity. Editorials demanded that Canada crack down on those who take advantage of Canada's refugees system. Some even suggested that the Tamils be sent back.

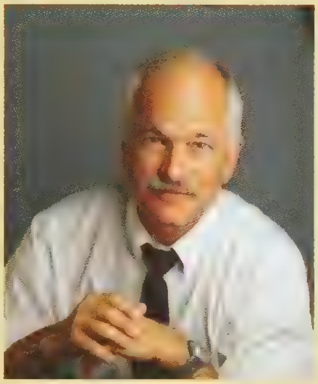
The formal government response was very generous. "My government will do anything but allow refugees in lifeboats to be turned aimlessly around in the ocean and turned away from our shores... To think that, in some way, 155 Sri Lankans will diminish our citizenship and ruin our immigration policies is not the resilience and strength of Canada" Prime Minster Brian Mulroney said with conviction. His Minister of State for Immigration, Gerry Weiner, reaffirmed this response by stating that no boats would be sent back under his watch, especially given Canada's previous experience in blocking S.S. Saint Louis from Canada. Many on the S.S. St. Louis are believed to have perished in the Holocaust upon their involuntary return to Europe.

Life in Newfoundland has always been tough, but with the Cod Moratorium in the 1990's, many fishermen lost their livelihood. They fared less in most of the social indicators, than those in Ontario, and Quebec, and to a large extent in comparison to those they rescued 25 years ago. Notwithstanding these setbacks, Newfoundlanders are a tough group of people, who thrive under adversity. These fishermen, many of whom are in their 70's and 80's, have withstood so much in their lifetime, and have achieved great strides. Their simplicity is astonishing, and their generosity captivating. Gus and his crew have never been recognized formally, aside from the honours given by the Canadian Tamil Congress, for their heroism. These men are likely the only group to have saved 155 lives in Canada to have never been honoured at a national level. When asked what would be the most appropriate way of honouring Captain Gus Dalton, he said "you should build a monument for refugees in Newfoundland." For those little boats of Newfoundland Lord, mean the world to me and the Tamil-Canadian community.

Gary Anandasangaree
is a volunteer with the Canadian Tamil Congress.


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Jack Layton, Remembering a Great Friend



In 2011, we said goodbye to Jack Layton, a great person, a great leader, a great Canadian, and a great friend of the Tamil community. Over the past two decades, Mr. Layton proved to be a very active supporter of the Tamil-Canadian community.

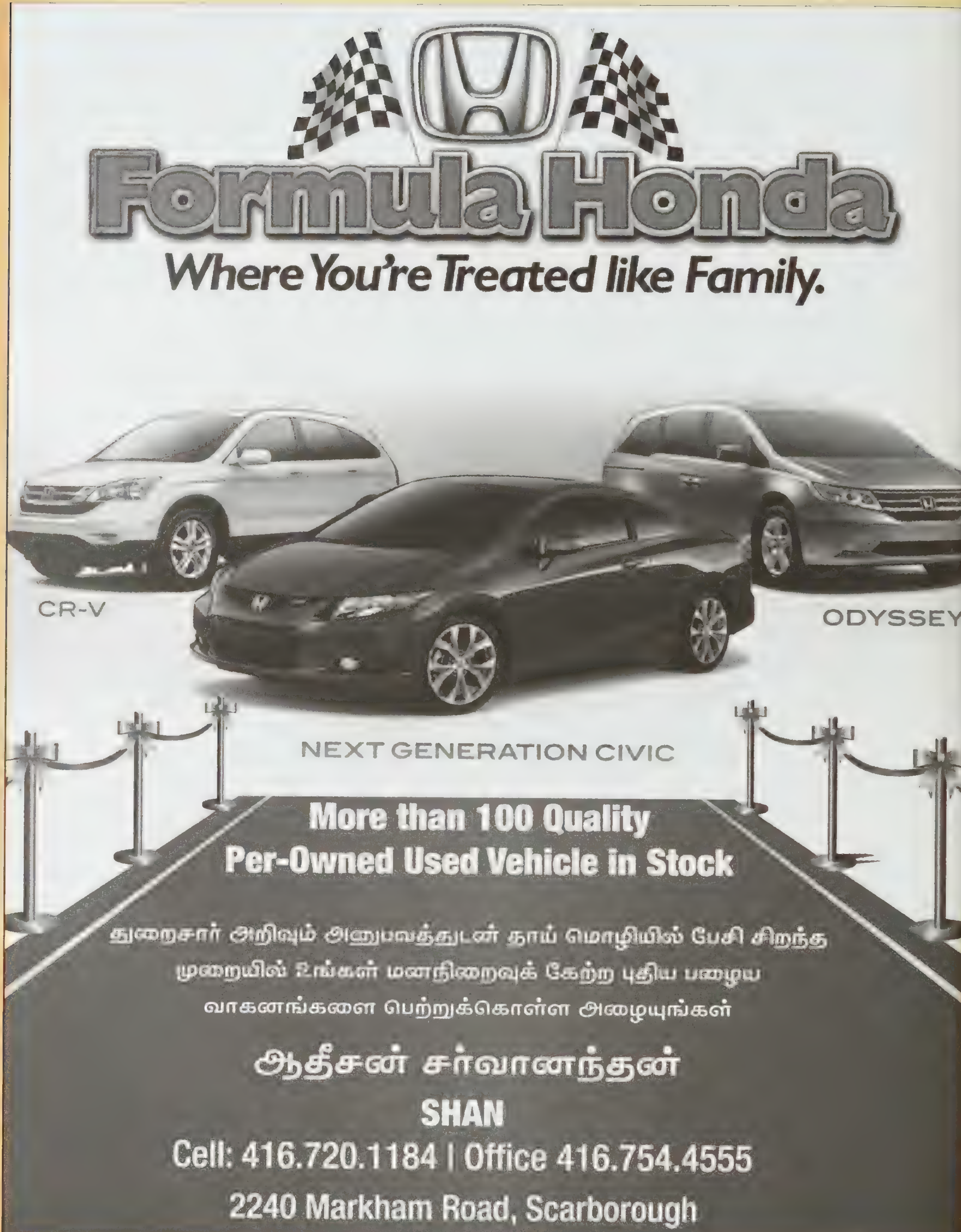
In a time of crisis in 2009, his leadership and commitment to justice made a meaningful impact in raising awareness about the conflict in Sri Lanka, and advancing the cause of human rights for all Canadians. While Sri Lanka's conflict escalated in 2009, Mr. Layton maintained communication with the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) and was instrumental in initiating an emergency debate in parliament. He urged the government to step in and address the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka when the war was at its most critical juncture. When thousands of Tamils rallied in front of Parliament Hill asking for the support of the Canadian government, Mr. Layton stepped forward and raised awareness about the conflict and urged the Government of Canada to intervene.

Mr. Layton was a strong supporter of the Tamil community even before he became the leader of the NDP. He supported the development of Tamil-Canadian community groups, such as the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre. In 2010, he kicked off the CTC walkathon in support of the Canadian Cancer Society, which proved to be a very successful fundraising event. Mr. Layton was also the keynote speaker at the 2010 annual CTC dinner.

Jack was much more than just a friend to our community. He inspired leadership within the Tamil community and went out of his way to help Tamils become leaders in Canada. This was evidence when Jack first approached CTC to identify a Tamil representative who could become a federal MP in Canada. Since Rathika Sitsabaiesan was nominated as the candidate by a team of people in the Tamil community, Jack supported and mentored Rathika throughout the entire process leading up to the historical election in May 2011. "When I was approached to contest in the 2011 federal election, it was Jack's conversation with me and his encouragement that persuaded me to make the final decision to run in this past election", said Rathika. After meeting with Jack at a rally in Toronto, we requested him to participate at Rathika's campaign in Scarborough. Jack accommodated our request and finished not only his historical campaign but also his last campaign rally on May 1, 2011 together with Rathika and the Tamil community in Scarborough. The 2011 federal election ended up being a huge victory for the NDP.

When Jack passed away this past August, the entire Tamil community mourned. Hundreds of us attended his tribute at Nathan Phillips Square organized by CTC. 'Newsmaker of the year', 'charismatic leader,' 'great Canadian' – all these phrases are apt descriptors of Jack whose last advice to all of us is "love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world".

Sivan Illango is a chartered accountant. He has over 20 years of experience in accounting, audit and advisory, specializing in the financial services industry.


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Diversity and Inclusion: Going Beyond the 'To Do' List

One of the greatest pleasures of living in this wonderful city is the global character that comes with it. One can experience the world right here in Toronto and its surrounding municipalities without paying the expensive air fares. While the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is the most ethnically and racially diverse Region in Canada where visible minorities make up 40% of the population, such statistics are not reflected in the work and labour force. The underutilization of skills and expertise of new and visible minorities to Canada has and will continue to result in lost opportunities for this region and nation wide.



A recent study put forth by Ryerson University's Diversity Institute found that visible minorities continue to be under represented in leadership roles in almost all sectors including public, corporate, and educational. Moreover, boards, commissions and political offices continue to be under represented across the GTA, though the current constituents are representing a very diverse community.

In the political arena, representation in the halls of decision making is still not representative of the makeup of the visible minority population. A recent report titled "The Diversity Gap: Electoral under-representation of visible minorities" points out some facts as it relates to under-representation in municipal government, for example 49% of Mississauga's residents are visible minorities, yet of the 12 council members that represent the various wards within Mississauga, none are visible minorities. Its neighbour Brampton is not far off – 57% of Brampton's population is composed of visible minorities (largely from South Asia), yet only one of the councillor is a visible minority. Numbers from other GTA municipalities including Toronto are equally as disconcerting.

At the federal level only 17% of the 47 GTA Members of Parliament are visible minorities, while at the provincial level; only 26% of the 47 GTA Members of Provincial Parliament are visible minorities. While the participation level of visible minorities at federal and provincial levels are better in comparison to the municipal government, they are still under-represented given their make up in the total population.

The cause and solution to this dilemma is complex and requires a broader vision and firm commitment from institutions to recognize the fundamental benefits of inclusion of this demographic. Diversity and inclusion needs to be more than a concept, but a practice embedded in the systemic and sustainable practices of organizations and government.

Political parties must revisit their policies and procedures to allow more people from under-represented groups to participate. At a local level, municipalities need to do more to reach out to the diverse communities to promote civic engagement. Overall, diversity and inclusion needs to be more than just an item on a check list.

The responsibility of 'changing the tide' cannot solely be left to the broader public, but must also be shouldered by potential leaders from the many under-represented groups. Community engagement and awareness about the possibility and need for change need to also be brought forward by interested leaders within these groups. The Maytree Foundation and Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance have been at the forefront of creating a change in the face of leadership and helping sectors realize the economic and social value that diverse leadership brings. In support of this growing change, the Canadian Tamil Congress continues to do its part in recognizing and nurturing young leaders, not solely for political representation, but to encourage leadership in all sectors. The proposed leadership academy is the first of many steps towards this positive change.

Piragal Thiru

is a 2011 DiverseCity Fellow, an initiative of DiverseCity: The Greater Toronto Leadership Project, and a Board of Director with the Canadian Tamil Congress.


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Black July:
Remembering the 1983 Riots in Sri Lanka

"Shoot! I am telling you, shoot! Shoot and run!" Seelan bellowed. Seelan was demanding that his childhood friend Aruna kill him and escape. Aruna saw tears in Seelan's eyes as Aruna pointed the gun and fired. Seelan collapsed dead.

A sudden death in the small village of Messalai in northern Sri Lanka would be the catalyst for what was to become one of the most damaging periods in Sri Lankan history. Seelan and Aruna were both Tamil Tiger cadres, and were being pursued by government forces when Seelan demanded that he be sacrificed. Seelan was one of Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran's closest friends.

This month marks the 28th anniversary of what became known as Black July. The riots of July 1983 in Sri Lanka would forever alter the course of ethnic tensions in the country, and would lead to the movement of Tamils out of Sri Lanka and into countries like Canada in increasingly dramatic numbers. The riots also marked a decisive shift in the course of ethnic politics in the country as non-violent approaches gave way to Tamil militancy.

When Prabhakaran received the news of Seelan's death, he went silent and plotted vengeance. A plan was hatched to ambush a military convoy on a narrow road in Tinneveli. On the night of July 23, a 15-man army patrol codenamed Four Four Bravo left camp and approached Tinneveli. Mines had been laid and the Tigers were putting the final touches on the detonators when the army patrol neared the site. As they drew nearer to the ambush, a heavy explosion sent the jeep flying into the air and the Tiger cadres opened fire, killing thirteen of the fifteen soldiers as they scrambled out of the truck.

Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene tried to keep the funeral for the dead soldiers from turning into a political demonstration. However, plans would not go smoothly. The arrival of the bodies from Jaffna to Colombo on July 24 was delayed by several hours, and the funeral had to be cancelled. In the meantime, a large group of people had gathered at the cemetery. As hours passed, the crowd grew more agitated. Around 10 p.m., violence erupted.

The rioting on this night continued for another week. Hundreds of Tamil and Indian businesses were burned, homes were destroyed, and many were beaten, shot, or burned alive in their houses or vehicles. Many women were raped or forced to exhibit themselves in front of heckling crowds of people. Perhaps the most infamous incident occurred at the Welikade maximum-security prison, about four miles north of Colombo. On the afternoon of July 25, Sinhalese prisoners gained entry into the wing of the prison holding Tamil political detainees and killed thirty-seven of them with knives and clubs while guards stood idly by.

Estimates of the number of people killed range from two hundred to two thousand, mostly Tamil. In addition to lives lost, the events of July 1983 also forced some 100,000 Tamils into refugee camps when their homes, vehicles, shops and belongings were destroyed. Around 30,000 people also became unemployed due to work sites being destroyed. A key element of many survivor stories is the random act of kindness

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provided by some in the Sinhalese community. As one Sinhalese individual recalled recently: "I was completely shattered for months (I was actually hospitalized of exhaustion) after running around transporting my friends and unknown Tamil-speaking families to safe places. We had nearly 15 people in our house."

Prior to Black July, many Tamils sympathized with the idea of separatism, but were wary of an armed struggle against the Sri Lankan government. Most militant movements in the early 1980s were small and fledgling organizations. In the early days, the Tamil Tigers were quite selective in their recruitment of cadres. A former LTTE cadre I spoke with in Toronto told me that at the time, the "LTTE was very careful in taking people. They didn't just take a bunch of people. They had studied the people, looked at their background.. they would give a person the run-around and then only take him in." After Black July, there was a marked increase in membership among all of the Tamil militant groups in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan government's response to Black July was dismal. As A.J. Wilson has argued, "President Jayewardene was unequal to the task. At first he seemed numbed and unable to confront the crisis, but he then proceeded from blunder to blunder. He appeared on television on 26 July 1983 with the purpose of assuaging the fears and hysteria of the Sinhalese people, but he did not utter a word of regret to the large number of Tamils who had suffered from Sinhalese thuggery masked by nationalist zeal." What Wilson calls Jayewardene's "ultimate blunder," however, was the passing of the Sixth Amendment in August 1983. The Amendment outlawed support for a separate state within Sri Lanka, and required all Members of Parliament to take an oath of allegiance "to the unitary state of Sri Lanka."

The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), a separatist political party, refused to take the oath. As Asoka Bandarage points out, "The TULF was committed to separatism, but it was also the main opposition party in parliament and the only democratic political voice of the Tamils." Refusing to take the oath abjuring separatism, the TULF leadership left for Tamil Nadu. With the TULF gone, armed Tamil militant groups began to fill the vacuum. Over the next several decades, Sri Lanka would descend into a protracted civil war -- one of the bloodiest in recent memory.

The story of Black July also runs as an important thread through Tamil Canadian history. The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) has done an admirable job in collecting some personal testimonies from survivors now living in Canada. Their website, Black July 83: Remembering Silenced Voices, was founded on the 25th anniversary of Black July in 2008. As one CTC member told me, "We wanted it to become an online Black July museum of sorts accumulating these testimonials over the years into the future. We knew these testimonials were an integral part of Tamil Canadian history as this incident triggered a large number of Tamils to flee to countries like Canada."

Amarnath Amarasingam

is completing his doctoral dissertation on Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism in Canada at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Most Tamils in Canada have a story to tell about Black July, from hiding in fear from Sinhalese mobs to stories of shelter provided by Sinhalese strangers they would never have the chance to thank. Almost three decades later, the memory of the Black July riots continues to serve as a reminder of Tamil grievances and a potent symbol for political mobilization.

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CTC Montreal Gala Dinner



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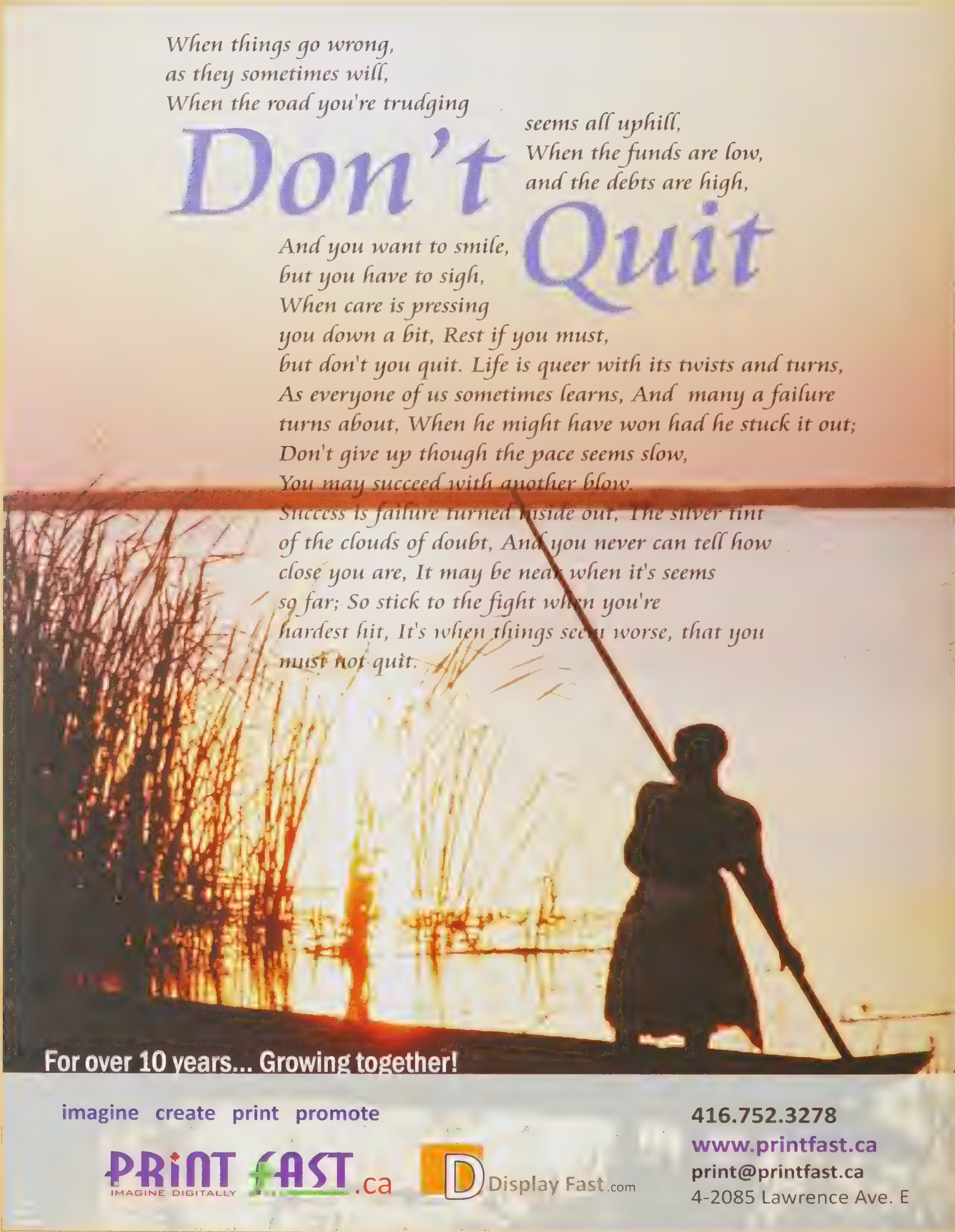


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Artist Profiles

Vaitheki Tharmaratnam: *Pianist*

Vaitheki has a diverse academic background and works for Accenture (Global Management Consulting Firm) as a Technology Consulting Analyst. To keep a balance in her life, Vaitheki partakes in various extracurricular activities including spending a significant amount of time volunteering with the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada. She also has successfully passed the Grade 10 Royal Conservatory of Music, piano practical examination. Vaitheki is a pianist and singer for a local Performing Arts Groups performing for events throughout the year.

Elisabeth Malini: *Singer*

Elisabeth Malini graduated from York University with a Bachelor of Commerce in French, and is currently pursuing a double degree in Vocal, Dance & minor in Mrithangam at Anaamallai University in Toronto, Ontario. In addition to her 17 plus years of performance in popular bands such as Super Leads and Mega Tuners, Elisabeth released her music album collection entitled Nizhalgal in 2006. Most recently, she was one of the international contestants from Canada who entered Super Singer 3.

Students of Guru Nirothini Pararajasingam: *Dance Performers*

Nirothini Pararajasingam is an accomplished Indian classical dance performer, choreographer and teacher who strongly believes in promoting values of Indian culture through Bharathanatyam. She received her initial training in Bharathanatyam from well known Gurus, including Smt. Balasundari Kanagasabai and Smt. Gowri Muthukumaraswami. She later mastered specialized techniques in Bharathanatyam through the guidance of Guru Vijayambikai Indrakumar. Her studies were concluded through the teachings of Guru Adayar K. Lakshmanan. She completed her Bharatha Choodamani diploma for dance and Nattuvangam at the Institute of Bharatha Choodamani and obtained her Bachelor of Science degree at Madras University.

In 1984 she began her teaching career in science and dance at the Colombo Hindu Ladies College in Sri Lanka for a duration of 5 years. During this period of time she participated in numerous performances along with her students. This included the Harichandra Ballet for which she was awarded the title of "Nirthya Choodamani"; and Beeshma Ballet, which was the first production to be choreographed with over 90 students. In 1990, she initiated Nirthya Kalanjali Academy of Fine Arts and in 2009 launched Niro Dance Creations (NDC), a fusion of international dance forms, in Toronto, Ontario. Her troop has performed in various multicultural events and media productions. In addition, for 4 consecutive years, her students have performed at the North American Fetna event. Furthermore, Natyanjali (2007), a classical performance, was recognized overseas (mainly in South India). In 2009, she received the Lieutenant Governor Award. Overall, she is a creative choreographer who has successfully produced several programs and received numerous awards.

Service Excellence Award

As part of our ongoing commitment to volunteerism and promoting community involvement, the Canadian Tamil Congress will honour the contribution of an individual who has supported the Tamil people. The recipient of this award will be someone who has demonstrated compassion, dedication and support to community-building efforts. This award will recognize the individual's long-term support, commitment and significant contribution to the Tamil community in Canada.

Award Recipient:



Honourable Jack Layton, (1950-2011)
Former Leader of the Federal New Democratic Party

In the early hours of August 22nd, 2011, our beloved friend, trusted Canadian and former leader of the Federal New Democratic Party, the Hon. Jack Layton, passed away peacefully at his home surrounded by family and loved ones. His death came merely weeks after announcing that he was fighting a new form of cancer, and just months after leading his party to its most successful federal election result ever.

Jack spent his entire life in politics, first as an academic, then as a city councilor and then in federal politics. During his political career, he advocated for causes he was so passionate about: poverty, the environment, public transit and workers' rights among many others. Among these causes was the cause of Tamil Canadians.

To Tamil Canadians, Jack was more than a parliamentarian; he was a dear friend who supported us during difficult times and often engaged with community members. CTC is grateful for the time he took to participate in community events, including joining hundreds of walkers for the walkathon in support of the Canadian Cancer Society, and electrifying our audience with his keynote address at the 2010 CTC Annual Gala Dinner. Jack and his party played an instrumental role in organizing the emergency debate in Parliament during the conflict in Sri Lanka; and more recently, after Jack had consulted our community, the NDP passed a resolution at their policy convention calling on the United Nations to establish an independent, international mechanism to ensure truth, accountability and justice in Sri Lanka.

Jack's lifetime work has been a testament to his commitment and devotion to public service and dedication to his Canadian family. Jack has time and time again stood up for freedom, peace, and equality for all and has proved to be an inspiration to all Canadians, both young and old. Through his sincere dedication to this great nation he served so well, Jack has left his footprint in the lives of all Canadians, irrespective of their political ideologies.

Leaders for Change Award

This award honours the unique contribution of an individual who through his or her exceptional vision, perseverance and commitment has redefined or strengthened the need for change in our society. The recipient of this award will be someone who has demonstrated an effort to strive for change in a way that has positively impacted the lives of others. This award recognizes a determined individual whose efforts are characterized by a dedication to leadership, a vision for change and a desire to enhance the lives of others.

Award Recipient:

Captain Gus Dalton,
Captain of the Atlantic Reaper



Augustus (Gus) Dalton was born on Colinet Island off St. Mary's Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador in 1930 to Gertrude and James Dalton. After living there for 28 years, he later moved to Admiral's Beach, a fishing port on the southern Avalon Peninsula. He has been married to Margaret Walsh of North Harbour for 48 years and they have three daughters, Bernadette, Diane and Arlene. A fisherman by trade, Dalton known to most as "Gus", eventually became the captain of the long liner, the Atlantic Reaper.

On August 11th, 1986, the lives of 155 Tamil refugees changed. It was on this day that Gus would literally become 'a fisher of men'. It was on this day, during a routine fishing trip, that he would become the source of solace for 155 Tamils refugees who had been adrift for days on two overcrowded lifeboats. After spotting the boats, Gus and his crew, Thomas Power, John McEvoy and Joe Mulroney, immediately went into action and called for back up. Gus emptied his boat of his catch, costing thousands of dollars, and started rescuing the people screaming for help. After a difficult and dangerous journey across the Atlantic and at a time when these men, women and children had just about lost hope, Gus and his crew brought them to safety. Initially housed at Memorial University, the rescued Tamil refugees were taken care of by the kind people of Newfoundland, before they were flown to Montreal and Toronto.

25 years later, we still remember. We remember the courage and generousity exhibited by Gus and his crew; generousity that has changed the lives of 155 Tamils who are now contributing citizens of this great nation. These proud Canadians have built their families, their businesses and their lives here and are eternally grateful to those who rescued them, and equally, to the country that gave them life and liberty.

Gus is considered by many to be a humble, kind, thoughtful and intelligent man whose lifetime concern for others has been tireless. The kindness exhibited by Gus, his crew members and the citizens of Newfoundland & Labrador on August 11th, 1986 is a testament to the spirit of Canadian values and will forever be engrained in the hearts and minds of Tamil Canadians.

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- Thirukural 1021, Thiruvalluvar,
a world renowned Tamil philosopher (1st Century BC)

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- திருக்குறள் 1021, திருவள்ளுவர்,
உலகறிந்த தமிழ்த் தத்துவப் புலவர் (கி.மு. 1ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு)